Virtual Learning and the Wyoming School Funding Model

Presentation to the Wyoming Legislature's
Joint Education Committee
May 31, 2022

Lawrence O. Picus (Picus Odden & Associates)

Improving the way public resources
for education are translated
into improved student learning

Agenda

- **Defining virtual learning**
- **Virtual learning in Wyoming**
- **Virtual learning and student performance**
  - **Evidence from the pandemic**
  - **Evidence from pre-pandemic research**
- **Implications for Wyoming's funding model**
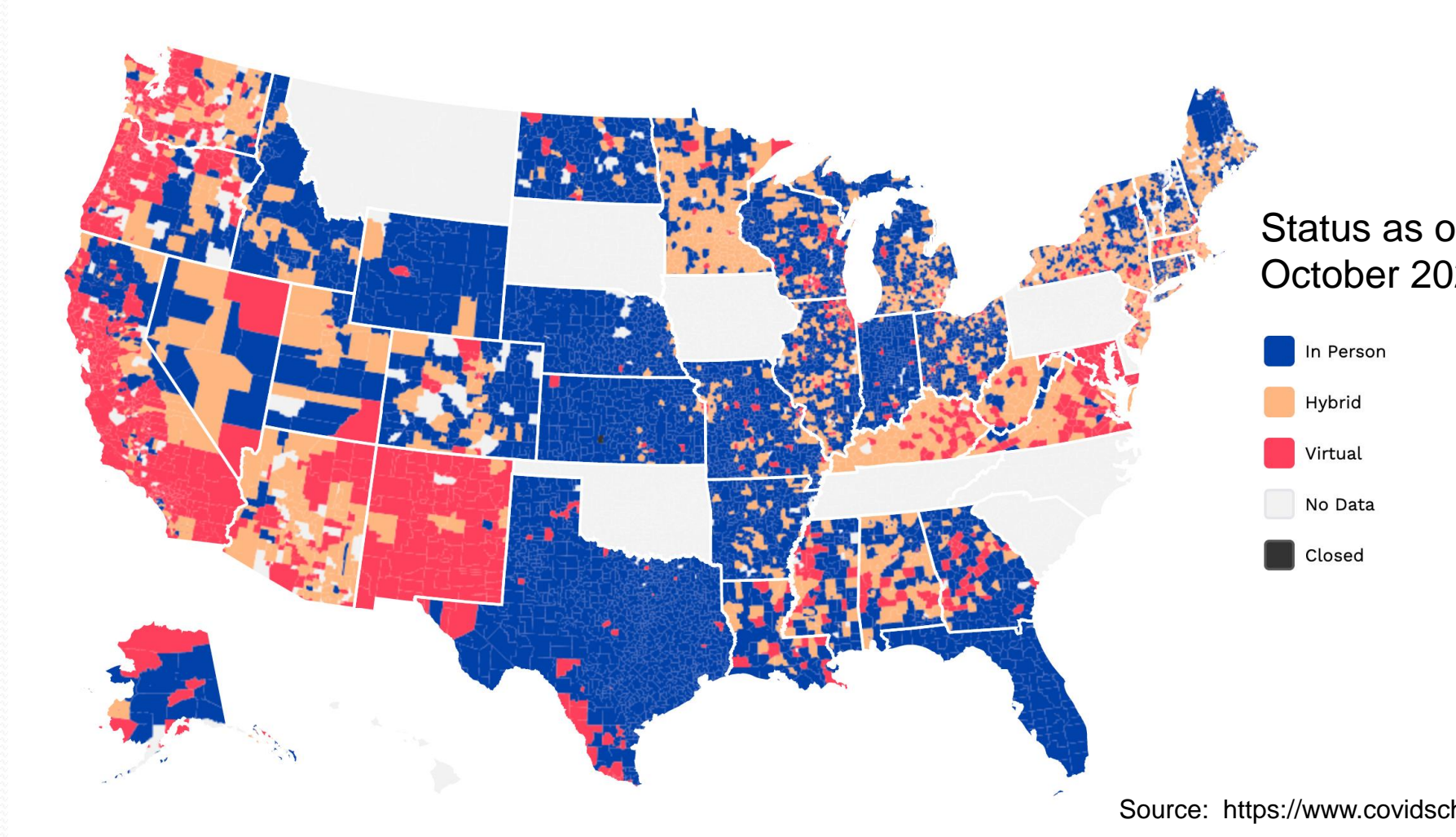- **Next steps?**

What is Virtual Learning?

- A learning environment in which one or more participants engages through an on-line connection

Instructor	Learners
☐ In his or her own classroom	☐ One or more other locations (i.e., home, another classroom or other district) ☐ In the instructor's classroom and other locations
☐ In an other location (i.e., home, other classroom, or other school or district)	☐ In a classroom ☐ In one or more other locations

Picus Odden
& Associates

Virtual Learning in Wyoming

- **Temporary virtual learning days**
- **Remote education within resident district**
- **Virtual education within resident district**
- **Current programs (2021-22)**
  - **Full-time state wide – five districts 938 students**
  - **Full-time district-level/Regional – 20 districts 2,692 students**
- **Student is counted in home school unless full time in other district**
- **If student is part-time in another district tuition is paid proportional to time in teaching district based on teaching district model funding**

Wyoming's Experience During the Pandemic

Status as of October 2020

- ■ In Person
- ■ Hybrid
- ■ Virtual
- ▢ No Data
- ■ Closed

Source: https://www.covidschooldatahub.com/

Picus Odden & Associates

Virtual Learning and Student Performance

- **Non (pre)-pandemic findings**
  - **Study designs don't match scale of pandemic on-line offerings**
  - **Focus on teacher knowledge and skills**
    - Teachers might not know what they need to teach effectively online
    - Teachers confident in subject knowledge, less so when it comes to technology
  - **Student access somewhat improved**
  - **Improved student learning in one meta-analysis, but focused mostly on places focused on computer assisted learning**

Picus Odden
& Associates

Virtual Learning and Student Performance

- **Pandemic specific studies**
- **12 state study that included Wyoming (Halloran, et. al., 2021)**
  - Everyone did worse during the pandemic
  - Schools without in-person instruction did markedly worse
  - Wyoming has the smallest drop in pass rates among the 12 states as well as the highest in person instruction rate
- **Students were less engaged with remote instruction (Aguilar, et. al. 2021)**
- **Students and parents struggled with on-line instruction (David, et. al. 2020)**

Implications for the Wyoming Funding Model

- 2020 recalibration – we "punted"
- Current model is silent on virtual learning
  - $250/ADM – 3:1 computer ratio
  - Estimates $350/ADM for 1:1 computer ratio
  - Staffing to support these ratios
- Additional considerations for virtual learning
  - Access to technology (infrastructure, computers, security, support)

Next Steps

- Should virtual learning be separately resourced in the funding model?
- What do we need to know to separately resource it in the model?
- Are current accountability policies adequate?
- What is the status of current virtual programs in Wyoming?
  - How do they compare to programs in other states?
- What are the cost implications?
- The experience of the pandemic is likely not a good example
- Others?